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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a comprehensive model for art education for the Pacific Islands that includes the study of the content of visual art, including production, history, criticism, and aesthetics. This comprehensive research-based approach can be an effective vehicle for teaching multicultural understanding. Five recommendations are: (1) consider art education programs that are comprehensive, discipline-based, and integrated into the core curriculum; (2) offer teachers inservice training opportunities in the content knowledge of art and in the comprehensive, discipline-based models for teaching art education; (3) expose children to art of their own culture to promote cultural preservation and understanding; (4) include the study of many cultures within art education programs; and (5) create an aesthetically pleasing, multicultural classroom by introducing and incorporating examples of art from around the world. Contains 5 references. (MM)

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Taking a Canoe to the Moon: Comprehensive Art Education for the Pacific

By Lori Phillips, Ed.D.*

While on Maap Island in the Micronesian State of Yap, Henry Falan, Director of Education for the State of Yap, shared a traditional Micronesia story about sailing a canoe to the moon. Sitting low on the horizon, the full moon, a golden orb, beckoned to five men who were resting in their carved canoe. After an hour of paddling furiously, the men discovered they were no closer to the moon; in fact, the golden orb was now rising in the sky and was even more out of reach. They stopped. Looking up at the golden moon above, they decided to aim their canoe upwards. In order to do that, they all had to move towards the back of the canoe. With their canoe now poised upwards, the men continued to paddle.

This story symbolizes the state of education for many Pacific Islanders. The carved canoe represents a strong desire to preserve individual cultures. The dream of reaching the moon represents an equally strong desire to attain that which appears to be out of reach—educational reform that incorporates a modern approach and multicultural understanding.

Learning about one's own culture and the cultures of others is emotionally, intellectually, and aesthetically stimulating. Exposure to the arts—literature, music, dance, sculpture—of other cultures broadens our understanding of the human condition. Art provides us with ways to feel what others have felt and know what others have known (Keith, 1993). The arts are also effective media for communication. They open doors to the world of non-verbal communication by carrying powerful messages about thought and culture. Art reflects what is important in life, to an individual and to a culture, and it is an important aspect of a well-rounded curriculum.

This paper describes a comprehensive model for art education—one that includes the study of the content knowledge of visual art, including production, history, criticism, and aesthetics. This comprehensive, research-based approach to visual art education can be an effective vehicle, a canoe if you will, for teaching multicultural understanding.

Multicultural Education—Understanding Our Own Culture and the Cultures of Others

Understanding one's own culture for the purpose of cultural preservation, and making connections between many cultures, are two of the many goals of *multicultural education*. Multicultural education

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helps students develop insights into their own and others' cultural backgrounds, thus reducing stereotyping and promoting intercultural understanding (Rubalcava, 1991). But, a clear definition for multicultural curricula has not been agreed upon (Appleton, 1983; Banks, 1989; Gay, 1979; Suzuki, 1984), and many proposed "models" of multicultural education are not based on ethnographic studies or empirical studies of culture.

James Banks, a respected theorist, has reviewed various models of multicultural education, and he criticizes them for emphasizing cultural differences instead of similarities. He, among others, feels that our similarities allow us to make connections between each other's cultures (Banks, 1989). He stresses the need for educators to understand the distinction between multicultural understanding and global education. Teachers should be careful not to confuse studies of ethnic groups with studies of nation-states. They may assume, for example, that while teaching about Mexico, they are teaching about Mexican Americans. Some teachers may be more comfortable teaching about art from Africa than about Afro-American art created in American communities (Banks, 1988). However, in comprehensive art education, local creations as well as objects from around the world are studied and their similarities examined.

Ernest Boyer (1995) believes that the purpose of studying culture is to affirm the sacredness of individuals and their different cultures, while recognizing the universal nature of all peoples. He emphasizes human similarities rather than differences. According to Boyer, there are eight universal cultural traits—*human commonalities*—shared by people throughout the world.

1. All of us experience the cycles of life.
2. All of us develop symbols.
3. All of us respond to the aesthetic.
4. All of us have the capacity to recall the past and anticipate the future.
5. All of us develop some forms of social bonding.
6. All of us are connected to the ecology of the planet.
7. All of us produce and consume.
8. All of us seek meaning and purpose.

These commonalities are reflected by the art produced in many different cultures. The elements of art are universal. The concept of artistic balance is important in Chinese art as well as in Samoan art; unity can be associated with an African community's problem solving rituals, as well as with Polynesians paddling an outrigger canoe; a closer look at how lines are used in Micronesian stick charts can offer new insights into Japanese ikebana flower arranging. Awareness of these commonalities can aid teachers in planning teaching experiences that help students build an understanding of the similarities and differences of individuals and cultures in our world. An effective method for teaching multicultural awareness and appreciation is through the world of art.

Finding Meaning Through Art

In the modern world, much of our exposure to other cultures comes through television and commercial advertising; however, mass media are often products of a dominant culture and might not always convey accurate pictures of different people and places. Visual arts, on the other hand, are created in every culture and can convey more accurate information about other peoples. Personal engagement with visual arts allows us to find lasting meaning in the world, making connections by communicating our ideas and values, and through our growing awareness of the meaningful expressions of others (Preble & Preble, 1996). Through the arts, students make connections with what they know and with what they seek to learn. These connections are important in bringing about good relations between people wherever they live—in communities close to us, or halfway around the world.

Universal art elements lend themselves to a universal curriculum. Teachers can expose children at an early age to examples of art from throughout the world and discuss comparisons between the different pieces of art. Questions such as, "How are we similar and how are we different?" can work for both

kindergartners and sophomores in high school. Students can discuss the Hawaiian wood-carved sculpture named Ku and compare it to the blocky modern style of Brancusi's "The Kiss." The teacher can ask, What does a tattoo have in common with graffiti? Is graffiti art? Are tattoos art? In what cultures and why? What do Japanese wood-block artists and impressionists have in common? The world is full of similarities and differences that are reflected in the artifacts and art of cultures around the world. Observing art, asking questions about art, and discussing art are important ways to understand our own culture and the cultures of others. Art education helps children understand the relationship of art to culture and history, and offers opportunities for them to communicate their views and judgments about art and its nature.

The Comprehensive Art Education Approach

If art is important to our society and a meaningful subject of study, then how do we teach it? One way is to implement an integrated, comprehensive approach to teaching art, an approach known as discipline-based art education (DBAE). This curriculum focuses on art as a serious subject of study and includes standards that assess the teaching and learning of art according to content knowledge areas, or *disciplines*. Harry Broudy influenced the development of this concept with his pioneering efforts in aesthetic education in the 1950s. In the early 1980s, Southwest Regional Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (now part of WestEd) further developed a structured approach to teaching art and identified a core art curriculum (Greer, 1984). Since that time, the approach has evolved in response to changes in curricular content and instructional integration. It now includes both creating one's own art and studying the art of other cultures as well as one's own.

In recent years, successful school districts throughout the nation have consistently adopted comprehensive art education standards and curricula that emphasize four main content areas (disciplines): art production, art criticism, art history, and aesthetic inquiry. These standards cover the four most important activities concerned with the visual arts: creating art; perceiving and responding to art's intrinsic qualities; understanding art's place in history and culture; and making reasoned judgments about art by understanding the grounds upon which those judgments rest. These four disciplines are the four major components, or parent disciplines, from which the content of discipline-based art education is drawn. The four general art education components are described below:

Art production refers to the making of art. For students, creating art is more than just an expression of individuality. Art production offers the student opportunities to become familiar with a wide range of materials, learn about traditions of craftsmanship, and develop personal qualities, such as persistence, patience, and the capacity for self-criticism, that are required for successful artistry. When art production experiences are connected with the other three disciplines, the quality of student art-making often reaches higher levels.

Art history offers the opportunity to look closely at the art of one's culture and that of other cultures. Students compare and contrast one piece to another. They may discuss and compare ways in which a piece of art visually illustrates recurring themes throughout history. Students might be asked to discuss universal themes in art. Teachers might ask "How is a Chagall painting similar to a Palauan story board?" or "How are Figian tapa and Hawaiian kapa alike?" These types of questions lead students to recognize multicultural connections and common concerns throughout time.

Art criticism challenges students to derive meaning from art and understand what information is being presented in a sensory form. It focuses on the perception, description, analysis, interrelation, and evaluation of art (Feldman, 1991). Students and teachers ask fundamental questions about the contents of a piece of art (perception and description), what it means (analysis and interpretation), and its value (judgment).

Aesthetic inquiry examines the nature of art and raises questions about its definition and significance. Aesthetic inquiry helps students learn to evaluate the basis on which to make informed decisions about art. Aesthetics asks questions about the beauty and nature of art: "How is the aesthetic experience different for an individual or for an entire culture?" "What is art?" and "What is good art?" The teacher might ask, "What do you mean when you say 'Abstract art is ugly?' or 'Anasazi Indian pottery patterns are beautiful?'" Aesthetic inquiry is a wonderful way to learn how people make judgments about the value and significance of art.

Different states might call these content areas different names, but upon careful examination, it is apparent that identified content areas fall into the four general categories; the language is different, but the concepts are the same:

Discipline-Based Art Education	U.S. National Standards/Goals 2000	Hawai'i Performance Standards	Guam Content and Performance Standards*	California Framework Components
Art Production	• Understanding and applying media techniques and processes • Using knowledge of structures and functions	PRODUCTION Create drawings, paintings, prints, and sculpture as exploration of media and processes, records of observation, and developing self-expression.	Creative expression and skill development	CREATIVE EXPRESSION Creating original artworks based upon personal expressions and responses ARTISTIC PERCEPTION Using senses to perceive art, nature, and the environment; identifying visual structures and functions of art and using the language of the visual arts
Art History	Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures	KNOWING ABOUT ARTWORKS AND THEIR CREATORS Talk and write about an artist and his or her artworks or a selected culture and its artifacts.	Artistic and cultural heritage	HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT Researching the role of the visual arts in culture and human history; investigating major themes of historical and contemporary periods and styles of the visual arts throughout the world
Art Criticism	Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others	• Elements and principles of design • Perception and observation of the environment • Color, value, and space • Analysis and criticism	Aesthetic perception	AESTHETIC VALUING Deriving meaning from artworks through analysis, interpretation, and judgment
Aesthetic Inquiry	Choosing and evaluating range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas	AESTHETICS Engage in discussions about what we may like or not like and how we come to some decisions about what we see, hear, touch, or smell.	Aesthetic valuing	

(P. Johnson, personal communication, 1998; Hawai'i State Standards, 1994; Guam Standards-draft, 1997)
*Guam standards are currently being pilot tested

Art education is most effective when offered as a statewide, sequential, cumulative curriculum across all grade levels, with student growth and achievement assessed on a regular basis. Gone are the days when students were given art materials and expected to let their creativity flow. Such an approach often resulted in art programs "with little or no structure, limited artistic content, and few meaningful aims" (Eisner, 1988). Art production should be connected in some way to the art history and culture brought into the classroom by the teacher or students. Using inquiry methods to explore the four disciplines of comprehensive art education, the class can discuss art and develop questions that help to find meaning through the arts (Getty, 1992). After observing many of these classrooms and preservice art programs, the author believes that a discipline-based approach to art provides the classroom teacher with an effective way to teach art and multicultural content knowledge.

Discipline-based art education has provided classrooms around the country with a successful model in which to build cultural understanding, while offering a comprehensive art education in our schools. Discipline-based art education helps teachers and students see connections between their own culture and cultures throughout the world.

Recommendations

1. Schools should consider developing art education programs that are comprehensive, discipline-based, and integrated into the core curriculum.
2. Teachers should be offered inservice training opportunities in the content knowledge of art and in the comprehensive, discipline-based models for teaching art education.
3. Art education programs should expose children to art of their own culture to promote cultural preservation and understanding.
4. Art education programs should include art from many cultures—including art created by ethnic groups within the local community—to aid in understanding our human commonalities.
5. Teachers can create an aesthetically pleasing, multicultural classroom by introducing and incorporating examples of art from around the world.

To reach the moon, one must strive to understand one's own culture and the cultures of others. Embracing our human commonalities is vital in this respect. Art education offers a sensory way of understanding the world around us. With a comprehensive art education program in place, canoes can remain canoes.....and become rockets. And rockets, we all know, can easily reach the moon.

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